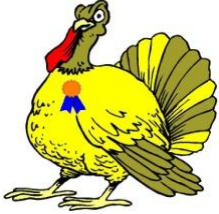


THE RSC GOLDEN TURKEY AWARD

USDA Clamps Down on School Lunch Choice

September 2012



The RSC Golden Turkey Award highlights absurd – though obscure – government regulations. This EPA rule unfairly burdens states with an arbitrary process for review.

IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION: THE USDA TELLS KIDS HOW MUCH TO EAT IN SCHOOL, IGNORING THE REQUESTS OF THE KIDS' OWN PARENTS.



[New federal standards](#) released by the United States Department of Agriculture on January 26th, 2012 significantly trim the diet being served from kindergarten through 12th grade.

While the goal of healthier school lunches is laudable, the means the USDA has employed to achieve this goal are extremely misguided. Of the many problems with the regulations, one of the most egregious is the calorie maximum set for three age groups. Under the rule, a kindergartner receives the same 650 calorie ration that a fifth grader receives. On average, a fifth grader weighs about twice as much as a kindergartner. But the new regulations go far beyond establishing calorie maximums. They also limit the amount of certain types of food that can be offered. For example, the new rules mandate that high school students receive no more than 2oz of protein with their lunch. For a student in the sixth grade, last year the federal government recommended a lunch of a minimum 785 calories. This year, that same sixth-grade student will be fed a maximum of 700 calories. The regulations do not even take into account the fact that children are different sizes and grow at different rates.

The goal of the school lunch program was - and is - to ensure students receive enough nutrition to be healthy and to learn. These federal actions, however, are counterproductive to that end. Indeed, the healthy diet of all kids might not even be the primary concern in this sweeping and thoughtless regulation; Agriculture Under Secretary Kevin Concannon was quoted as [saying](#) that "The reform will also create a 'friendlier food environment' for vegetarian and vegan students by allowing for meals containing tofu and more legumes." Parents know that their kids deserve all of the healthy and nutritious food they want, and should not be forced to comply with a bureaucracy's sweeping definition of what is best for their children.

In a response, Rep. Steve King (R-IA) has introduced H.R. 6418, the No Hungry Kids Act. This legislation repeals the USDA rule that created the new standards, prohibits the USDA's upper caloric limits, and protects rights of parents to send their children to school with the foods of their choice. All RSC Members are encouraged to support and cosponsor H.R. 6418. For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Thomas Binion at Thomas.Binion@mail.house.gov.

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